

Battle tracking:

Leaders' books set the stage for success

By Sgt. Jimmy Norris

Every trade has its tools. While many assume the tools of a soldier's trade include martial implements such as rifles and bayonets, one crucial tool which is often overlooked is the leader's book.

"A leader's book is a tool that's primarily used by first-line supervisors and platoon or section sergeants to keep track of those administrative, training and [mission essential task list] related information requirements that can't necessarily be stored in long-term memory," said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Green, battalion commander, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. "In plain English, the leader's book is a tool that helps you keep up with things you need to keep track of."

A variety of information can be kept in a leader's book including a soldier's family information, his uniform sizes and equipment serial numbers. But according to Command Sgt. Maj. Clifford West, command sergeant major of USASMA, that's only the beginning.

"It has to contain more than just your shoe-size information," he said. "A lot of times people only have administrative data, like shoe size, phone number



Photos by Sgt. Chad Jones

and address. The important stuff is your 'go to war' standard; your training management information."

He explained a leader's book should contain a list of the collective tasks in a unit's METL, a list of the associated individual tasks and a way of referencing when and how well each soldier was last trained on those tasks.

In addition to training information, a leader's book can contain a variety of tools and information that can make a leader's job easier.

"I used to cut out articles that pertained to what we were doing," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley. "They were a good idea for teaching the soldiers about the importance of the mission. I would also include a list of schools, especially NCO development courses. I'd include a description of the school, the length, where the school is, etc. Include anything that allows you to communicate with the soldiers."

Others use leader's books at training meetings.

"Every now and then you find an open day in the training schedule," said Sgt. Maj. Brad Meyers, a Class 54 student at USASMA. Meyers is a ranger who recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom. "I'd ask my squad leader's what training they wanted to plan for that day and they'd come up with something like mountaineer training. That's when I'd say 'show me your leader's book.' I'd look through the leader's book and [point out tasks pertaining to the unit METL which hadn't been trained to standard]. I'd then remind them to train on the required stuff before they got to the fun stuff. Leader's books are great tools for keeping track of training like that."

Some recommend having more than one leader's book. Green recommends three.

The first should contain the administrative data that a sergeant needs to know about soldiers and their families, but won't be needed in the field.

The second leader's book is what Green calls a "Non Op-Sec (Operational Security)" leader's book. This is a leader's book that goes to the field and contains soldier training data, copies of serial numbers for weapons and equipment and emergency information, such as a soldier's blood type.

The third, which Green referred to as a "for combat Op-Sec leader's book," contains information similar to that found in the second leader's book, minus information which might be considered sensitive.

"A leader should commit to memory Pvt. Smith has a wife and two kids, but do you want Pvt. Smith as a [prisoner of war] to have information about his wife and kids used against him?" asked Green.

There is no mandated format for keeping a leader's book. However there are certain criteria that each should meet.

"It's got to be designed so it's user friendly to the user," said Meyers. "You can ask 10 different sergeants major what a leader's book

should look like and you'll get 10 different answers because they design their leader's books to work according to their needs and according to the requirements of their units."

There are however, certain things the experts said all leaders' books should have in common.

"For squad leaders and below, it has to fit in the cargo pocket," said Meyers. "For first sergeants and platoon sergeants, with the number of soldiers they have to keep track of, the books will be a lot bigger, but they should still be able to put it in a ruck sack and take it to the field."

"If it doesn't fit into a cargo pocket it's probably not getting used," added West.

While it's generally agreed that leader's books can come in a variety of formats, there is one area where the experts differ. Whether or not electronic media, such as Palm Pilots or CD-ROMs, can be used for leader's books is a source of contention for some.

"Electronics need batteries. They're susceptible to dust, rain and a number of other conditions which might be encountered in the field or on a deployment," said Meyers. "A piece of paper, on the other hand, as long as it's weather proofed, will last as long as you maintain it."

Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Preston, Combined Joint Task Force Seven, sees things differently.

"I think Palm Pilots are acceptable," he said. "I see this as the evolution of the pocket notebook and pen."

Regardless of differences in opinion on what should be in a leader's book, and what type of medium should be used, the belief in their usefulness is unanimous.

"If used correctly by an NCO as a tool to assist in the training management, counseling and supervision of soldiers, a leader's book can be very, very useful," said West.



Personal Data Sheet

Last / First / MI _____
Rank / Grade _____ DOR _____
PMOS _____ SMOS _____ ASI _____
BASD _____ BPED _____ ETS _____
SSN _____ Age _____ DOB _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone () _____
Initial counseling date _____
Last counseling date _____
PULHES _____
Height _____ Weight _____ Blood type _____ Eye color _____
Security clearance _____ GT score _____
Religion _____ Hair color _____
Swimmer y / n _____

PAI

POA _____ Will _____ DD93 _____
SGLI _____ ID Tags _____ ID Card _____
FCP _____

Army Physical Fitness Test

Push-ups _____ Sit-ups _____ Run time _____ Date _____
Score _____ Score _____ Score _____ Total _____

Sizes

BDU Hat _____ Shirt _____ Pants _____ Coat _____
Boots, combat _____ Kevlar size _____ Gloves _____
NBC mask _____ Date fitted _____ Inserts y / n _____

Marital Status

Marital status: Single / Married / Divorced / Widowed

Spouse's name _____

Anniversary date _____

Child's name _____ Age _____

Child's name _____ Age _____

Child's name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Housing: Government / Economy housing

Education

Civilian: Highest level completed _____

Military: _____

PLDC date _____ BNCOC date _____ ANCOC date _____

ABN date _____ AAS date _____

Combat Lifesaver date _____ Master Fitness date _____

Other _____

Next of Kin
HOR _____ Name of NOK _____
Relationship _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone () _____
POV info
Civilian drivers lic. # _____ State _____ Expires _____
Make _____ Model _____ Year _____ Color _____
License plate _____ Post decal _____
Auto insurance company _____
Policy # _____ Expires _____
Military drivers lic. # _____ Expires _____
Defensive Driving Course (DDC) date _____ Expires _____
Last POV inspection date _____
Required Training/Classes
CTT date _____ CTT score _____
Drownproofing date _____ NBC Chamber date _____
Consideration of Others date _____ EO date _____
SAEDA date _____
Other training _____ Date _____

Awards / Decorations
AAM _____ ARCOM _____ MSM _____ Other _____
BRM
Weapon type _____
Weapon # _____ Qualification date _____
Expert _____ Sharpshooter _____ Marksman _____
Crew-served weapon type _____
Weapon # _____
Qualification / familiarization date _____
Medical
Medications _____
Allergies _____
HIV test date _____ Immunizations current: y / n
Profile _____ Date _____ Expires _____
Other

